HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

The Ten Commandments of Hunting Safety

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

1. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction. Do not point a firearm or bow at anything you do not intend to shoot. Control the direction of the muzzle at all times. Never rest a muzzle on your toe or foot. Keep your finger out of the trigger guard until the instant you are ready to fire. Always keep the safety on until ready to fire; however, the safety should never be a substitute for safe firearm handling.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

2. Trust every firearm or bow with the same respect you would show a loaded gun or knocked arrow. Every time you pick up a firearm, the first thing you do is check to see if it is loaded. Be sure the chamber and magazine are empty and that the action is open until ready to be fired. If you do not understand how to determine if it is loaded, do not accept the firearm until someone has safely shown you that it is unloaded. Read your instruction manual carefully before you handle new firearms or bows.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

3. Be sure of your target and what is in front of and beyond your target. Before you pull the trigger you must properly identify game animals. Until your target is fully visible and in good light, do not even raise your scope to see it. Use binoculars! Know what is in front of and behind your target. Determine that you have a safe backstop or background. Since you do not know what is on the other side, never take a shot at any animals on top of ridges or hillsides. Know how far bullets, arrows and pellets can travel. Never shoot at flat, hard surfaces, such as water, rocks or steel because of ricochets.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

4. Unload firearms and unstring conventional bows when not in use. Leave actions open, and store sporting arms in cases when traveling to and from shooting areas. Take bolts out or break down shotguns if necessary. Know how your equipment operates. Store and transport firearms and ammunition separately and under lock and key. Store firearms and bows in cool, dry places. Use gun or trigger locks and guards when not in use.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

5. Handle the firearms, arrows and ammunition carefully. Avoid horseplay with firearms. Never climb a fence, a tree or a ladder with a loaded firearm or bow and arrows. Never jump a ditch or cross difficult terrain with a loaded firearm or nocked arrow. Never face or look down the barrel from the muzzle end. Be sure the only ammunition you carry correctly matches the gauge or caliber you are shooting. Always carry arrows in a protected cover or quiver. Learn the proper carries. Try to use the two-hand carry whenever possible because it affords you the best muzzle control. Always carry handguns with hammers over an empty chamber or cylinder. If you fall, be sure to disassemble the gun and check the barrel from the breech end for obstructions. Carry a field cleaning kit.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

6. Know your safe zone-of-fire and stick to it. Your safe zone-of-fire is that area or direction in which you can safely fire a shot. It is "down range" at a shooting facility. In the field it is that mental image you draw in your mind with every step you take. Be sure you know where your companions are at all times. Never swing your gun or bow out of your safe zone-of-fire. Know the safe carries when there are persons to your sides, in front of, or behind you. If in doubt, never take a shot. When hunting, wear daylight fluorescent orange so you can be seen from a distance or in heavy cover.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

7. Control your emotions when it comes to safety. If you lose control of your emotions you may do something carelessly. If you have just shot a target or animal you probably will be excited. At that moment you may turn with a loaded firearm back towards your friends or you might run with a loaded firearm towards a downed animal with the gun safety off. You or someone else may be in danger once you lose control of your emotions. Show discipline. Rehearse in your mind what the safe actions will be. Do not allow your daydreams to replace good judgment. Show restraint and pass up shots which have the slightest chance of being unsafe.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

8. Wear hearing and eye protection. While shooting at the range, you must wear hearing and eye protection at all times. Firearms are loud and can create noises which are damaging to a person's hearing. It can be a gradual loss of hearing due to outbursts of noise over many years. The damage could also be immediate, especially if your ears are next to a muzzle blast. Vibrations from the blast are enough to create loss of hearing. Wear glasses to protect your eyes from escaping gases, burnt powder (especially in blackpowder shooting), and other debris.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

9. Don't drink alcohol or take drugs before or while handling firearms or bow and arrows. Alcohol and drugs impair normal physical and mental body functions and mustn't be used before or while handling firearms or archery equipment. These substances affect emotions, making it easier to lose control.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

10. Be aware of additional circumstances which require added caution or safety awareness. Just because something isn't listed under these "ten commandments of shooting safety" doesn't mean you can ignore it if it is dangerous. There may be rules such as in muzzleloading or archery or posted at a shooting range which should also be followed. Also, practice reloading safety by following and reading all specific instructions. Practice all commandments of shooting safety. Ensure a safe future for you, others and the shooting sports!